

Dealing with Doctrinal Distractions
How Does the Pastor-Teacher and Grace Believer Deal with False Doctrine.

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“Contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints “ (Jude 3) Jude’s concern for these believers resulted in a change of direction. He had intended to write concerning the salvation shared by believers. It had become necessary for him to write that they contend for the faith.

This need has not changed in the last nineteen hundred years. The Church is inundated with false teaching, false practices, misapplication of Scripture. Just about everywhere the believer looks he can see serious problems. This shouldn’t be surprising. Almost every New Testament letter was written at least in part to counter these problems. Many are familiar with passages such as 2 Timothy 3:1, “that in last days, perilous times will exist.” Many misunderstand these statements thinking a distant future time was being described. Paul wrote this because it was something which Timothy was to be soon facing. Timothy needed to know what to expect. As a result these problems have been in existence since the first century of the Church.

Some believers have developed entire “ministries” around exposing error. A famous fundamentalist pastor once said, that the best way to build a large church is to pick a fight and fight it! These people are always fighting something: evolution, modernism, postmodernism, Roman-catholicism, Mormonism. They always manage to find an enemy on the horizon to which they direct everyone’s attention. People involved in such groups might know much about err, but how much truth they know and live is questionable.

Some believers take the other extreme, avoiding any type of controversy, not wanting to be a nit-picker and avoiding the accusations of being too critical! Taken to its extreme, such avoid criticizing anything remotely labeled “christian”. When there is a genuine enemy on the horizon, they turn away or bury their head in the sand. Interestingly, people associated with groups or churches of this nature are also poorly taught and lack discernment.

Both sides are likely to engage in some form of dialogue or debate with others. The former engage in a more dogmatic, vitriolic debate or “apologetic”. The latter try to be of a kinder disposition wanting to engage in a “friendly” non-condemning dialogue.

How the Church is to face doctrinal errors is the subject of this paper. The author’s opinions will not be the basis. In fact those opinions have been challenged and altered in face of God’s Word. To do this, the various passages describing the errors and a response to the errors will be considered. An attempt has been made to consider most of the key passages. Not all errors are the same and not all involve the same type of people. It will be necessary to note who is involved and the nature of such errors. If the response is stated within the passage this will be noted. The place of debate or dialogue described by Scripture will be important to a proper picture. With all the information in hand, it is hoped that a proper perspective of the Church’s response can be seen. Before beginning the specific study of these passages, it would be helpful to briefly consider some of the situations that unnecessarily give rise to these issues.

Misunderstanding the Church’s Makeup

The church is an assembly called out of the world (Acts 15:14, John 17:14-16). It is an assembly of believers in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:20-21). The Church at large is the body of Christ. On a local level, a church should reflect this character. The Church has brought much distraction upon herself

by encouraging the unsaved to assemble with them. When Paul wrote the Corinthians regarding the possibility of an unbeliever coming into the assembly, he employed a Third Class condition.¹ (1 Corinthians 14:23-24). This indicates that while it is possible it is not reality, which would have required the Indica-tive in a First Class Condition. Paul realized it was possible that an unbeliever might come in, but it wasn't what was happening! Believers assemble to be taught and edify one another by the exercise of their spiritual gifts. The assembling of believers was not intended to be evangelistic or a "seeker service". The regular, intentional introduction of unbelievers into an assembly often distracts both believers especially pastors from their primary responsibilities to one another.

Misunderstanding the Church's Purpose

Since the nature of the Church is not understood neither is her purpose. The Church has one commandment, to love one another as Christ loved them (John 13:33-34). A preoccupation with unbe-lievers, the world, etc. often results in believers depriving other believers of this love and misdirecting this love! The Church is also a means of demonstrating an aspect of God's wisdom to spirit beings (Ephesians 3:11). This takes place as God deals with His Church by grace before these spirit beings (Ephesians 3:9).² They see God save, mature and complete His church, some times despite the individuals' actions. As they observe this, they learn something of God's wisdom.

It is often stated that the Church is here to change the world. One would search in vain to find any such instruction. A variation on this is that the Church is here to evangelize the world. Again, no New Testament writer expressed such an idea. Christ told His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 to "to dis-ciple all nations..." When Paul preached, he knew that only those who were "set in order for eternal life," would believe (Acts 13:48). Individually the Grace believer's responsibility toward the world is to live a life in which he is contrasted as a small light in the midst of a crooked and perverse race (Philippians 2). The result is that he can give the gospel as the reason for the hope that is in him (1 Peter 3:15). Misun-derstanding God's purpose for the Church can give occasion to these doctrinal distractions.

Misunderstanding the responsibility of the Pastor-Teacher

Pastor-teacher is a gift (Ephesians 4:12). It is a spiritual gift which enables one to shepherd a portion of God's flock by teaching God's Word. The three chief responsibilities of the shepherd are: watching over, teaching, leading. Watching over is the verb behind the noun "bishop" or "overseer". One watches over by looking for spiritual dangers, such as spiritual wolves and by watching for spiritual needs which can be met by spiritual nutrition from God's Word. In the face of error and wolves these believers need truth taught accurately. A spiritual deficiency is not addressed by a pastor's advice or opinion but by teaching God's Word. A shepherd leads. He teaches the sheep and then walks before them, living what he has taught. They are to follow his lead. These three are the pastor-teacher's primary responsibilities.

In many places the pastor-teacher is doing the work of an evangelist. Sometimes, this is due to misunderstanding Paul's instruction to Timothy. Timothy had been gifted as an evangelist by Paul laying hands upon him. Timothy was not a pastor-teacher. The pastor does not give attention to the goats at the neglect of the sheep. In this same vein, the pastor is not a minister to the community. His responsibility is the flock and its well being. He is not to compel the unsaved to believe by presenting convincing argu-

¹ "The third-class condition (also called the more-probably future condition) presents the condition as uncertain of fulfillment, though still likely." David Alan Black, *It's Still Greek To Me*; Grand Rapids; Baker Books, 1998, p. 145.

² "Administration" in the A.V. from the T.R. should be "dispensation" as per all other manuscripts.

ments for today's issues. Making the pastor responsible for those outside the flock distracts from God's purpose for him and the local assembly.

The Contest for the Faith

Jude 3

Because Jude's charge to "contend earnestly for the faith" is often the watch cry of those watching for enemies, it is a good place to begin. Generalizations regarding the interpretation of this verse have led to its misunderstanding and misuse. Consulting five commentaries on this passage, one is led to conclude "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" is Christian truth in its whole, namely apostolic doctrine or even the gospel. To varying degrees, these commentators also interpret the "contending" to be some demonstrable preaching or teaching against false doctrine. Yet, within the context of this letter, Jude's charge takes a different direction.

The Faith

Most of our English Bibles correctly represent the article with faith, hence, "the faith" [τῆ πίστεως]. While there are several uses of the definite article with the word faith [see appendix], it always occurs to indicate something specific in the context. The various uses of faith in the New Testament include the act of faith at the point one believes the gospel concerning Christ's death on the cross for sins and His resurrection from dead ones; faith in a promise to the believer; faith as part of the fruit from the Spirit which can be individualized "my faith" or "your faith" and directed at promises; faith as a spiritual gift; faith as a measured provision for the use of one's spiritual gift. In addition to these uses there are many occurrences of "the faith" which describe a specific set of truths.

"The Faith" is a narrower portion of doctrine than all Christian truth. It is that set of truths which describes how the believer may live the spiritual life. It includes the means of victory over the believers three spiritual enemies. Peter wrote concerning Satan, "Whom, you resist firmly by the faith" (1 Peter 5:9). This set of truths was a mystery, which the deacons were to have in a clean conscience, that is, their lives align with what they know (1 Timothy 3:9). Paul wrote Timothy that some would depart from this faith giving heed to truths which involved prohibition to marry and abstinence from foods as a means of living this spiritual life (1 Timothy 4:1-3). A man that does not consider his care for his own household, he does not provide for his own, he has denied this body of truth, he is not living the spiritual life (1 Timothy 5:8). Likewise, a young widow who becomes more interested in finding a husband among the believers than serving in an assembly has set aside the first faith (1 Timothy 5:11). She is not spiritual. Believers who stretch out after riches, have gone astray from the faith (1 Timothy 6:10). Paul had agonized the good agony of the faith and encouraged Timothy to do the same (2 Timothy 4:7; 1 Timothy 6:12). When a believer uses this truth properly he can individualize it as "the faith of you" (cp 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10). Thus, "the faith" does not describe the whole of Christian doctrine. It is a limited portion of doctrine which describes the spiritual life.

The Holy Spirit led the New Testament writers to use "The faith" for this body of doctrine because victory and spirituality are promises from God. Faith makes a hope real (Hebrews 11:1). That hope comes from a promise from God (Acts 26:6; Titus 1:2). The promise must legitimately be addressed to the Grace believer. A hope is always something which the believer does not yet have (Romans 8:24). A hope is something yet future; immediate future or distant³ future. Jesus had promised his disciples that in

³ "Distant future" is a human perspective. From God's perspective it is just a moment and the believer too can share God's perspective. The Grace believer should consider God's promise for the Rapture to be "near" or "at hand".

“that day” they would know experientially that He is in the Father and they are in Him and He is in them (John 14:20). He promised that if they would remain at ease in Him that He would be at ease in them and they would bear much fruit (John 15:5). The believer logically reckons that he is in Christ a dead one to the sin nature and a living one to God (Romans 6:11). The believer does not direct faith at this position because it is not a promise but a logical reality in the mind of God. However, there are promises related to that position. The believer is promised access to God through his position in Christ (Ephesians 3:12). The believer has access to God’s grace in his position in Christ (Romans 5:2). The believer has victory over his sin nature in his position in Christ. The believer directs faith at those promises so that access becomes real. The believer has been promised rest and must believe that in Christ at the throne of grace, he can indeed cease from his works and have rest (Hebrews 4:9-16). Promises which involve aspects of the spiritual life form the content of the faith.

The Fight

“Contend earnestly” implies that there is a fight and so it is with the root *agōn* [αγων] from which this verb derives. The believers’ combatant/s in this fight or struggle are unnamed in this verse. The Fundamentalists of the first half of this century understood it to be Modernists, blatant unbelievers within their seminaries and denominations. Their fight for Biblical truth earned some the title “Fighting Fundamentalists”. One of their own historians, George W. Dollar wrote a two part history of their struggle, the title of the second volume being *The Fight for Fundamentalism*.⁴ Even writers and commentators who would classify themselves as Evangelicals but not Fundamentalists agree that the believers’ combatants are unbelievers or those who oppose truth. Collectively, but with different means, they opine that believers are to be fighting or “contending” with these unbelieving combatants to protect “the faith.” One writer comments,

“Whatever is questioned by contemporary audiences needs to be addressed. We need to study and know these areas. Believers ought to educate themselves on the relevant issues and be prepared to provide a biblical defense (2 Cor. 10:5; Jude 3).⁵

“Contend earnestly” translates *επαγωνιζομαι* “to contend strenuously in defense of”⁶ It is a perfect form of *αγωνιζομαι* - “to be a combatant in the public games; to contend, fight, strive earnestly”⁷. The English “agony” derives from this word. The prefixed preposition *επι* gives it a stronger, perfect emphasis, “really strive”. It is a deponent⁸ verb. A struggle or fight always affects the subject doing the fighting, therefore it is naturally a Middle voice. It only occurs in Jude 3. Moulton and Milligan cite a

⁴ George W. Dollar *The Fight For Fundamentalism*; Sarasota, Fl.: published by author, 1983

⁵ Gary R. Habermas *The Resurrection of Christ in The Fundamentals for the Twenty-First Century*; Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000, p. 264.

⁶ Thomas Sheldon Green, *A Greek And English Lexicon to the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970 p. 67

⁷ *ibid* p. 3

⁸ A deponent verb occurs only in the Middle/Passive Voice form. Normally, these are verbs which do not have an Active sense but by nature are Middle - the action affects the subject.

secular occurrence of a struggle for a city.⁹ Their citation doesn't note whether it was a military struggle. They cite examples of **αγωνιζομαι** referring to warfare and sporting games.¹⁰

Αγωνιζομαι and its cognate noun occur several times in the New Testament. Christ used the verb to describe the struggle to enter at the narrow gate (Luke 13:24). He used it when explaining to Pilate that if His kingdom were out of this world as to its source that His servants would fight to keep Him from being turned over to the Jews (John 18:36). Paul employed it to describe those competing in an athletic race (1 Corinthians 9:25). Paul's description of beating his body and leading it away as a slave demonstrates that this involved his spiritual life. This passage may contribute to a clearer understanding of the believer's responsibility. Paul also desired that every believer be mature in Christ Jesus. Therefore, Paul agonized to this end (Colossians 1:29). Not only did Paul agonize for them but so did one of their own, Epaphras (Colossians 4:12). Epaphras desired that they be mature ones and fully assured in God's will (v. 13). The last two occurrences in Paul's letters combine the noun and verb forms of this word in the phrase "fought the good fight" (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7). In all its occurrences this verb emphasizes a struggle. In Paul's writings it is always a spiritual struggle. It always involved some aspect of the spiritual life.

The noun form **αγων** also describes a struggle or conflict. Paul used it of a real physical conflict with unbelievers who opposed him (Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:2). This spiritual conflict involved Paul's spiritual life in the light of outside pressures. Paul also had a great struggle for the Colossians in his desire to see them mature in Christ (Colossians 2:1 - see last paragraph). As noted above Paul used the noun twice combined with the verb in his letters to Timothy. In both of these occurrences Paul called it the good fight. It is modified in 1 Timothy 6:12 by the Genitive "of the faith." Similar to Jude 3 this involved the spiritual life. Finally in Hebrews 12:1 Paul pictured the spiritual life as a race within an arena. The "race" is the **αγων**. The race has been set before us to be run. The encumbrance of unbelief should be set aside so that the believer can focus on the finish line and finish the race. Like the verb the noun describes a struggle in the spiritual life.

Luke uses **αγωνια** one time to describe Jesus' literal agony which He experienced in the garden while praying (Luke 22:44). That agony for Jesus was mental and emotional resulting in real sweat drops as of blood.

The New Testament uses of the cognates of **επαγωνιζομαι** demonstrate that a struggle is taking place. As noted, the **επι** prefix strengthens the idea of the verb. Therefore, this is a stronger conflict. Since Paul wrote that he fought the good fight, Jude's charge, approximately ten to fifteen years later, is that the believers are to really fight the fight!

Jude's was concerned about a false version of grace. Some had slipped in secretly (Jude 4). The judgment of these men had been previously written¹¹ About 10-15 years early Paul and Peter had written concerning these men (cp v. 17). They exchanged the grace from God for lewdness. They misrepre-

⁹ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1930, p. 227

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 8

¹¹ "long ago" translates **προγεγραμμενοι** a Perfect Participle meaning that they had been previously written to this judgment with the result that it still stood in writing.

sented grace as the license to be immorally lewd. These also denied the only Master¹². Jude's letter historically traces God's judgment on those who had acted in this immorally lewd manner, and had rejected God's authority. The angels who did not keep their first way of dwelling¹³ (6), Sodom and Gomorrah (7), and the ones defiling the flesh (8), specifically represent the former. Israel who was brought out of Egypt (5), those rejecting lordships and blaspheming glories (9-10), and those in the way of Cain, the error of Balaam and the rebellion of Korah, shepherding themselves¹⁴ are part of the latter. These two problems go together and the people of whom Jude wrote were involved in both.

Because these men announced a message of grace, they appeared to be clouds but had no water, late autumn trees without fruit, wild waves which only foam, and wandering stars¹⁵. These men switched a perverted version of grace for real grace. The grace from God provides liberty from sin not bondage to sin (cp Romans 6:6, 14). They were ungodly sinners speaking with hard words against the Lord (14-15). These were characterized as tearing down, being soulish¹⁶, and not having the Spirit (19). The Lord will come to perform judgment against all these (15).

In the face of these false teachers, Jude charged the saints to fight for the faith. Living the faith would be the best way to counter these false teachers. The saints should not only speak the faith but live it. While living the faith the saints could direct faith at God's promise to edify or build them up, rather than tearing down (20). Unlike the soulish men who did not have the Spirit, these saints, if they were living the faith could worship [A.V. "pray"] by the Holy Spirit (20). They could keep themselves by the love of God (21). Loving the Father would involve loving other believers within the family by laying down one's life for them (1 John 4:21-5:1; 3:16). Loving the Son involves being patient under temptation (James 1:12). These saints could eagerly anticipate the mercy from our Lord Jesus Christ at the snatching away of His saints (21; cp Titus 2:13).

Having first looked out for their own spiritual well being, these saints could then have mercy on those doubting¹⁷. Some believers had been influenced by these false teachers. They needed to be saved by snatching them from the fire and while hating the garment stained by the flesh. "Snatching from the fire" is not a reference to Hell but a picture of their dire situation under the false teachers' influence. How does one snatch another from the fire? By really fighting for the faith. Believers needed to really live the spiritual life for themselves and then for the sake of others. False teaching concerning how to have victory

¹² **δεσποτῆς** is "a master, lord, one who possesses supreme authority," W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*; MacDonald Publishing Company: McLean, Virginia, p. 700

¹³ The **-τηριον** ending indicates place or manner.

¹⁴ **ποιμναινω** is the verb of shepherd [pastor]. They did not submit to a pastor but acted as their own.

¹⁵ A wandering star could not be counted on in determining direction for navigation.

¹⁶ Soulish [**ψυχικοῦς**] is translated in 1 Corinthians 2:14 "natural" describing an unsaved man.

¹⁷ A large portion of the Majority text has the Nominative Plural ending which would make this participle the subject of the verb "have mercy". Some of the Majority text along with other manuscripts have the Accusative Plural ending, so that the participle is the object of the mercy. See apparatus in Zane C. Hodges / Arthur L. Farstad *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, 1982, p. 722.

over one's spiritual enemies needed to be countered with accurate teaching concerning how to live. This is really fighting the good fight.

It is interesting to read Jude's closing words. Ultimately it is God who is able to guard those who are doubting (24). He is able to guard them from stumbling. He is even able to make them stand before His glory, blameless in intense joy. Accurate teaching concerning the spiritual life emphasizes the believer's responsibility but always does so within the frame work that when the believer has so chosen, it is God who gives the victory. It is God who completes the salvation.

Jude's letter demonstrates that the best way for a believer to counter false teaching concerning the spiritual life is to live the spiritual life the way God revealed that it is to be lived. The common responses to false doctrine, engaging in a tough apologetic against false teaching, or debating the false teachers, is not even hinted at by Jude. There is no hint that Jude's charge to "contend" for the Faith, meant to strongly argue on behalf of the faith. Jude does not indicate how this is to be done. Jude doesn't indicate how, because this was not Jude's purpose. Jude's charge was to "really struggle" in the Faith. Taking the spiritual life seriously, really living it and teaching it would do more to counter errant spiritual life teaching than any argument.

The Christian life is not a constant struggle. The believer can rest at the throne of Grace (Hebrews 4:16). However, there are times when the believer does engage in a real struggle. In the churches which Jude was addressing, they had to really struggle because of the pervasive influence of these false teachers who were in the assemblies. This is a good challenge to carefully discern who is teaching in our assemblies and what they are teaching. A little deviation may result in a big struggle.

The remainder of the paper will consider additional passages warning of false doctrine. Some of the passages deal specifically with the spiritual life but other doctrines are also of concern. If there is a response this will be especially important in demonstrating that Jude's charge is not unusual. The final section includes some Scriptures which lay emphasis on the importance of believers' conduct matching their word. This is an important part of accurate teaching.

Scriptures which address believers facing doctrinal deviations

Acts 15 & Galatians 2:1-10 - A Theological Debate?

In 50 AD the first officially recorded church council gathered in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas' work throughout Asia was being undermined by believers of Jewish decent. These men were teaching the Gentile believers that they needed to be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1-2). This is present tense salvation, not initial. As Jews, their daily lives or present tense salvation had been lived under the law. They carried this over into the present dispensation. The event in Acts 15, was not intended to decide whether Paul was correct! Paul had received his message directly from the Lord (Galatians 1:11-12). Paul explained the purpose of this meeting to the Galatians. It was so that he was not running in vain or had run in vain (Galatians 2:2). "In vain" translates **ΚΕΝΟΣ** empty of content. Paul wanted the church in Jerusalem to instruct these men to stop following him and undermining his work. If they kept this up, everything Paul had taught among the Asian churches would be without content as the people practiced a life by law rather than a life by the grace from God. Paul wrote the Galatians that at this council nothing was added by these men to that which he had already received from the Lord (Galatians 2:6). Acts 15 is not a debate but an attempt to get an official letter regarding Paul's work. Paul didn't need this for himself but for the spiritual lives of the people in the churches (cp 15:30-31).

Acts 20:28-32 - Wolves among the Shepherds-

On his final trip to Jerusalem, Paul stopped briefly at Miletus and met with the elders of the Ephesian Church. Paul's use of the three titles of the elder: elder, bishop [overseer], and shepherd [pastor

indicated in the verb “feed”] clarifies Paul’s audience. These are “pastors” to use the common English title. These men were about to face wolves from the outside and a defection within their own number (29-30). Some of the shepherds were about to seek some of the sheep for themselves.

Paul’s charged the pastors to give attention to themselves (28). This is unselfish and in the best interest of the flock. A shepherd who does not take spiritual care for himself is in no position to care for the flock. Having given attention to themselves, they were to also give attention to the flock over which the Holy Spirit has placed them as overseers. They were to be ready to help those who were weak (33-35). This weakness is not physical but spiritual. As the physically weak sheep would be easier prey to the wolves, so spiritually weak believers are to these spiritual wolves. Attention would need to be given to these weak believers. While they attend, they needed to remember that their work is not one for material gain. The wolves were out for gain. Helping the weak without placing any undue responsibility of paying the workers’ way was the example Paul himself had left. Paul never once instructed them to debate or preach to these errant brothers or the wolves.

Romans 14:1-15:13 -Logical reasonings regarding doubtful matters

It is normal for healthy churches to have believers at various levels of maturity. It is not unusual to find believers who have not yet begun to grow spiritually. Newly saved believers or some who have not previously had the advantage of good teaching have a need to begin growing. So it was in the Roman church. They were some weak in the Faith, that body of doctrine which delineates how the spiritual is to be lived. The context indicates that these believers hadn’t learned some key truths concerning the spiritual life (Romans 16:25-27).¹⁸ Because they hadn’t really learned how to live the spiritual life by God’s grace their spiritual life was built around abstinence from certain foods and wine (14:2, 3, 21). They also observed certain days as more special than others (14:5-6, e.g. a sabbath). Such believers can cause some disruption in assemblies.

Churches are not to refuse weak brothers but receive them (Romans 14:1). After receiving them they are not to engage the weak in logical reasonings over doubtful things: food, wine, days. A **διαλογισμος** is a logical reasoning [**λογιζομαι**] through [**δια**] a matter, involving questionings and considerations. The dialogue or logical consideration would likely consist of “biblical” arguments in favor of such activities. This is not the course of action. A strong believer does not sit the weak believer down and logically reason through these matters.

Paul explained how such a situation is to be handled. The strong are told not to despise the weak and the weak are told not to judge the strong (v. 3). Paul laid most of the responsibility upon the strong believers. They were not to place a cause of stumbling before any brother (v. 13). They were to seek the edification not the tearing down of God’s work (vv. 19-20) They were to keep their faith concerning what they may do to themselves so the weak would not be encouraged to engage in activities while doubting (vv. 22-23). In 14:24-26¹⁹ [16:25-27 in most Bibles] Paul briefly stated the key truths by which God will cause these weak believers to stand firmly [establish]. It is important to note that Paul had already stated that this is not a logical reasoning through the touchy issues. These weak believers are in need of teaching, not about foods or days but about how to live. Once they learn how to live by Paul’s good news which involved living by grace in Christ, the issues of food, drink and days would resolve

¹⁸ The textual evidence strongly supports the inclusion of Romans 16:25-27 following 14:23 not as a doxological closing to this letter. In addition to the textual evidence, it fits the context well.

¹⁹ In the Majority text and other manuscripts these verses occur here.

themselves. In 15:1 he again reminded the strong that it was their responsibility to bear as a burden [βασταζω] the weaknesses of the weak. They were to receive one another as Christ received them (15:7-12).

Romans 16:17 -Responding to those causing divisions within assemblies.

Romans 16:17 is an added note to the above section, as Paul closed this letter. The potential conflict between the weak and strong believers could become serious. The believers needed to look out carefully [σκοπεω] for those causing divisions contrary to the practical teaching which they had learned. Σκοπεω is the act of looking at critically.²⁰ The translation “mark” is based upon the noun form σκοπος a mark upon which one can fix his eye. The ones causing divisions were carnal. Διχοστasia, is a work of the flesh involving a division within a group rather than away from a group (Galatians 2:20). They were also making offenses. This translates σκανδαλα, a hindrance or road block. Paul had written concerning road blocks in chapter 14. They consisted of actions in disregard of weak believers. Actions regarding days and foods hinder growth in the lives of the weak. The division would form along lines of the strong and weak believers. Similar to Romans 14 Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8:10-13 that a believer can be hindered [σκανδαλιζω] by observing another believer eat who has proper knowledge. The weak brother’s conscience is built up to eat the thing which he doubts and according to Romans 14:23 he sins. Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 8:12 that the strong brother also sins by encouraging the weak to eat when doubting. Paul had taught them not to do so. Such teaching was doctrine for faith and practice [διδαχη]. The divisions and offenses are contrary to the practical doctrine [διδαχη] which they had already learned.

Paul did not instruct the Romans to corner them or debate those who made divisions and hindrances. He instructed them to avoid them. Εκκλινω is to lean out or away with the idea of avoidance. Rather than giving them attention, plain simple avoidance is the proper response.

2 Corinthians 10:5 Contending with false charges

Paul addressed nearly half of this letter to the problem of false apostles. These false apostles were a real problem to him as they maligned Paul before the Corinthian saints, attempting to assert that he was a false apostle and they were the genuine ones (2 Corinthians 10:7; 11:5; 12:11-12). These were not only false apostles but Paul considered them ministers of Satan, transforming themselves as ministers of righteousness (11:13-15). They claimed that Paul was only bold in writing but in presence was humble (10:1). Paul could be bold in presence if necessary, (10:9-11; e.g. Acts 13:46; 16:18; 28:23-28). When dealing with believers Paul’s normal demeanor was gentle. Even when defending his apostleship before the Corinthians, Paul did not enter into a debate. He didn’t even fight.

He considered this a soldiering. This was a Satanic struggle (10:3-4). The overthrowing of fortresses and overthrowing of logical reasonings was done by pointing to what he had taught and how he had lived among them. Paul pointed to his manner in speaking the good news. He did not use the fleshly standard of comparing one’s self with oneself (10:12). He did not boast in another’s standard of measurement. If one is to boast, boast in the Lord (10:17). All believers equally stand in Christ and can boast in Him. Paul contrasted his ministry to that of the false apostles.

²⁰ O. Michel - Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament; Abridged in One Volume, William B Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1985, p. 1048

These attempted to corrupt the minds of the Corinthians and lead them astray (11:3). Their corrupting deception was done by announcing another similar Jesus which Paul didn't preach (11:4). Paul didn't announce the earthly life and activities of Jesus. Many do! The Corinthians were receiving a different Spirit which they had not previously received. They were not being taught by the Spirit or having the fruit which the Spirit alone can produce. They also were receiving a different good news than that which they had welcomed. These contrasts pointed out that these men are not at all like Paul. Paul's knowledge had been plainly visible to the Corinthians (11:6). Paul's soldiering was not according to fleshly motivation or works. He simply pointed back to his teaching.

Paul also pointed back to his conduct among the Corinthians. He had humbled himself while among them (11:7). He had evangelized the good news as a gift, without charge (11:7). Other churches had helped Paul but he had taken nothing from the Corinthians and would continue to take nothing (11:8-10). Paul did not do his work for monetary gain. His purpose was the edification of the Corinthians.(12:19). In none of this did Paul resort to fleshly means of soldiering.

Philippians 3:17 Imitating good teaching when facing dogs

The saints in Philippi had to deal with some "evil workers of the concision" (3:1-2). Paul never charged the Philippians to counter with rhetoric but to walk as they had Paul for a pattern (18). He didn't look back at his previous "religious" accomplishments, but continued pressing forward, attempting to answer to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (3:9-14). Paul wanted to arrive at the out resurrection from dead ones (3:11). This resurrection is not the Rapture but the potential daily experience, to live in one's position in Christ so that he can experientially know Christ's resurrection, sufferings and death (3:10). Paul was concerned with how he lived out that resurrection. They were also to watch carefully [ΣΚΟΠΕΩ] any believers who walked as Paul walked. Instead of giving attention to the evil works, they were to watch those were living properly. Again the emphasis is that a Biblical spiritual life is the best means of dealing with false teaching.

1 Timothy 4:6 -Laying truth before believers while others depart from the faith

"Some will depart from the faith." It is common to point the finger of this passage at the liberal churches "out there". Paul warned Timothy of this because it would be a problem in the Ephesian church. For the modern believer, this is a potential local church problem. Departing from the faith, is not a departure from the doctrine of salvation but a departure from God's revealed means of living the spiritual life [see The Faith above].

Some might not think this too serious of an error. Some may even teach that God allows a variety of means to live the spiritual life. However, the seriousness of this departure is indicated in the words, "giving attention to errant spirits and doctrines from demons." This is not satanism. Spirits lead believers astray. They lead them astray by doctrine which is intended for the believer's faith but not his practice indicated by the word διδασκαλια. This is not heresy a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). This misuse involves demons not the flesh, therefore a perversion of Scripture takes place. Such perversions involve the prohibition of marriage and abstinence from foods. Abstinence from foods can be found in the law but prohibition of marriage is beyond the bounds of the original text. Since it is a perversion, these would also require abstinence from foods other than those which God has prohibited under law. An example can be seen in some elements of Seventh Day Adventism which teach a vegetarian diet for religious reasons. There are some in fundamental groups which teach religious vegetarianism. This is a perversion of Scripture and a doctrine of demons.

Paul told Timothy that he would be a good slave of Jesus Christ by placing these facts before the brothers (4:6). **Υποτιθημι** means “to place under; to lay down ... to suggest, recommend to attention.”²¹ Timothy was to recommend to the attention of the brothers that God has provided all things to be received with thanksgiving (v. 5). This was accompanied by nourishing the brothers. Nourishing [**Εν-τρεφω**] is the act of feeding. Paul played off the issue of foods by this word. He was not writing about physical feeding but spiritual or mental nourishment. The nourishment consists of words: words of the faith, words of good doctrine. The faith is again the doctrine of the spiritual life. The spiritual life is of first importance in matters of practice. The doctrine [**διδασκαλια**] is doctrine for faith but not practice. Rather than arguing against those departing from the faith, it was better to accurately teach believers the Scriptures which had been perverted. This doctrine was a perversion of Old Testament Scriptures. The believers needed to see what those Old Testament Scriptures actually said and this would counter such teaching well.

Finally, Timothy’s response to such twisted doctrine was to avoid it. Paul called such perverted doctrines, myths, fictional stories which had little or no basis in fact. He further described these myths as profane, that which is so horrid one would steer clear of it and old wives tales, that in which no one would put serious confidence. Timothy’s avoidance of these is indicated by the verb **παραιτεομαι** - from **παρα** - along side and **αιτεω** - to ask. The derived meaning is to “decline receiving, refuse, reject.”²² Timothy was not to engage in a dialogue or a debate. He was to reject these myths. He was not to give attention to them. He was to continue teaching the Biblically revealed spiritual life and accurately teach the Scriptures which had been perverted. In doing this, he would be a good slave of Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 6:5 Pursuing Godliness while others pursue Satanic perversions

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul delineated how to handle matters both good and bad regarding various people within an assembly. Timothy was to teach and follow these things (6:3). However, some being puffed up, would teach differently²³ than Timothy was to teach (6:4). They would not give their attention to healthy words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was not writing of all Christ’s words as recorded in Matthew -John. Paul equated New Testament doctrine with the words of our Lord. Paul himself was given direct revelation from the Lord for the space of three years and then periodically throughout his ministry (Galatians 116-17; cp 1 Corinthians 14:37; 11:23).

These words are measured by [**κατα**] godliness. Paul referred to godliness as a mystery truth which is great (1 Timothy 3:16). Godliness is an exclusively New Testament truth. It was revealed in the earthly life of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 3:16). Godliness is the expression of God’s kind of life and nature through a human form. It is a life which is honoring²⁴ to God, not by some superstitious acts but by truly reflecting God’s character. This was not possible during Old Testament times as no Old Testament saint had eternal life or shared in God’s kind of nature while they lived upon the earth (cp 1 John 5:11, 12; 2 Peter 1:4). Since the words are measured by a mystery truth, the words of Christ are those of Paul and the other Apostles as well as those in John 13-17.

²¹ Green, op cit, p. 195

²² *ibid* p. 137

²³ **ετεροδιδασκαλω** **ετερος**-- different and **διδασκαλω** - to teach

²⁴ The noun **ευσεβια** describes devoutness in the Jewish and secular religious system. The New Testament alters this idea as the believer genuinely shows out God’s character.

Those who teach differently pervert doctrine for faith only, indicated by the word διδασκαλία. They do not understand anything. They so pervert truth that the real meaning is lost. They are mentally diseased about disputes and wars involving words [λογομαχίας], that is verbal, fights over semantics.²⁵ Disputes [ζητεῖς] are searches or seekings that turned into debates for that which is sought. These enjoy debating. The outcome of their searches and fights are envy, strife, blasphemy and evil suspicions. They resent other's well being, ie. envy, they argue or are cantankerous, ie. strife, they misattribute acts and character regarding others, i.e. blasphemy, they are always suspicious that others lack in character, suspecting that everything is worse than it appears. Their minds are corrupted in a state of mental rust or decay (6:4). They have turned themselves away from the truth. The truth delineates how the believer may have victory over the sin nature so that God's character can be seen. They don't want such truth and turn themselves away from it.

They suppose godliness is a means of gain (6:5). They seek material prosperity. They have twisted doctrine for faith only by misusing God's promises to Israel for material prosperity. It is possible that they also twisted truths such as the Sermon on the Mount, which is for faith but not for the Grace believer's practice. Many believers twist the Sermon on the Mount as a basis for prosperity by misusing such texts as, "You seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33). Yet Christ's words in anticipation of the church were to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34), to love by "laying down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Rather than seeking the best for another believer without regard to personal cost, these are seeking to get gain and suppose that godliness is a way of reaching that goal. Timothy is not told to deal with them, or to lecture them or debate them. He is to withdraw himself.²⁶ Timothy is just to stay away from them.

2 Timothy 2:18 - Cleansing one's self from from false teachers

At Ephesus, some teachers had misplaced the resurrection, claiming it had already taken place (2 Timothy 2:17-18). Many amillennialists, especially full preterists teach that the resurrection has already taken place. They make the resurrection spiritual rather than literal and physical. Such teaching overturned the faith of some. This was their faith in the faith. Our Lord gives a victor's wreath of righteousness to those loving His appearing (4:8). It is a crown of righteousness because the anticipation of our Lord's soon coming for His saints, motivates the believer to live the spiritual life as God revealed. When someone says that the resurrection has already taken place, it overturns the proper grace motivation to live the spiritual life.

Paul reminded Timothy of a faithful word (2 Timothy 2:11-13). Each of the following four statements is a First Class Condition. "The "if" does not imply any uncertainty or doubt but for purposes of presentation is regarded as fulfilled, as true;"²⁷

²⁵ The verb is built from the root μαχομαι- "to fight or quarrel" Green, op cit. p. 114. This word is compounded with θεος in Acts 5:39, θεομαχοι "god fighters", specifically, those who fight god. It is compounded with θηριον a wild beast, in 1 Corinthians 15:32 θηριομαχεω - to fight a wild beast. If these compound words consistently illustrate the idea, then λογομαχεω is a fight against words.

²⁶ This ending, αφιστασο απο των τοιουτων is omitted in some texts. See the United Bible Society text for extensive evidence in favor of its inclusion. The Nestle-Aland text presents the textual evidence in favor of their judgment, omitting many manuscripts which include this ending.

²⁷ D. Edmond Hiebert, Second Timothy; Moody Press: Chicago, 1958, p. 62.

Since it is true that we died with Him, we will also co-live with Him.
Since it is true that we are patient, we will also co-reign with Him;
Since it is true that we say “no”, He will also say “no” to us.
Since it is true that we are unfaithful, That one remains faithful,
He is not able to say “no” to Himself.

The certainty communicated in those lines is meant to encourage saints. It counters many false teachings which make the believer’s salvation, past, present or future dependent mainly or totally upon him.

“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows the ones who are His.” and “Let everyone naming the name of the Lord, depart from unrighteousness.” (2 Timothy 2:19).

Timothy was to remind the believers of these things (2 Timothy 2:14). While reminding them, he was to seriously testify that they should not war or fight by words. This is the same word used in 1 Timothy 6:4 translated “disputes” or “strifes over words”. Timothy was not to fight words. Paul himself, when writing the Corinthians, said that when he would arrive he would know not the words of those puffed up but the power (1 Corinthians 4:19). In the face of such serious claims it is tempting to engage in such a war but Paul pointed out that it is not useful [χρησιμος]. In fact, rather than accomplishing the intended goal, it overthrows those who are hearing the verbal battle. “Overthrows” translates καταστροφή from κατα-down, against and στροφή [στρεφω] to turn, therefore, to turn down against or to twist down against. Our English word catastrophe is derived from this word and may vividly illustrate Paul’s point. It is normal to think that a verbal battle will correct such problems but inevitably ends in a spiritual catastrophe.

Timothy was to be eager, diligent, “keep at it” to present himself to God as an unashamed worker (2 Timothy 2:15). He could do this by cutting a straight clear path regarding the Truth. The Truth, again, is the means of victory over the sin nature. In the light of error, Timothy should keep on cutting a straight course! He shouldn’t deviate. He shouldn’t become distracted! For himself, he was to shun or remain aloof [περιστημι] of voices or chatterings which had no content. The words of the false teachers, with no content are like gangrene. Timothy is to go around such, and not engage them in a war of words.

Paul pictured Timothy’s response to the false teachers to that of a household full of utensils. Some of the utensils are common and some are special. Timothy was to cleanse himself of these people, keeping clear of such false teachers, remain aloof of them or going around. By doing so, Timothy, and any other who would obey this instruction would be a utensil for honor having been set apart to be used by the Master and prepared for every good work (2:20, 21).

2 Timothy 2:23-26 Avoiding disputes

The following section is a continuation of the preceding verses. It is a good example of the dangers which result from engaging in debates. It begins with Paul’s charge for Timothy to flee youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22). Timothy was possibly between the ages of 37 and 43. In this context “youthful lusts” describe strong desires to jump into this mental melee and begin to argue and fight over words. In contrast to strife and fighting, Timothy was to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with those calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. Rather than fight with the false teachers, he was to pursue these good qualities with those believers who were living the spiritual life.

Timothy was to beg off or reject moronic²⁸ and unlearned disputes or debates. He needed to know that these will only result in wars or fights. Debates do not aid in knowing God’s truth. It is neces-

²⁸ **μωρας** describes a deficiency, in many instance a mental deficiency.

sary that God's slave does not fight (2 Timothy 2:24). He must be gentle, expressing teaching, and forbearing. Gentle is a term describing a soft manner towards a child. Διδακτικον describes one who teaches or is characterized by teaching. Forbearance is putting up with another's activity which is annoying or distasteful but not wrong.²⁹ "Meekness is a tameness of spirit, ...a control of the mind which keeps the mind directed at the object without distractions."³⁰ Timothy needed to train these in the basics, with discipline and proper motivation [παιδευω] (2 Timothy 2;25). Timothy's demeanor, while teaching, would be a good example of how these should be facing false doctrine.

Those in need of this training were opposing themselves [Middle voice]. Such training was with the hope that God would give them repentance to a full experiential knowledge. Paul's use of επιγνωσις meant that these were believers. They had some experiential knowledge but hadn't gone further so that such truths had become a real part of their lives. The goal was that these regain their senses out of the snare of the devil. They had been caught alive by Satan. By attempting to debate and oppose this false teaching, they had opposed themselves. They were ensnared because of Satan's desirous will. Paul mentioned some works of the flesh. Satan does not and can not control the flesh. Satan has organized a system which provides opportunities for various works of the flesh to vent. This is called the world. The world system gives adherence to debate as a vent for cantankerous argumentation [ερις] (cp 1 Corinthians 1:20 - συζητητης; Galatians 5:20). Perhaps, God would give these the opportunity to change their minds and recover the sobriety, realizing that this method does not accomplish God's purpose for the believer's spiritual life.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 What to do in hard times

Again, Paul's warning of the type of men Timothy would encounter was not directed at the unsaved "out there." Romans 1:29-32 indicates these types of men have been around since shortly after the flood. Paul wrote to Timothy about people in the Church. These resist the Truth [victory over the sin nature] in a manner similar to Jannes and Jambres' resistance to Moses (3:8). They oppose the truth by having a form of godliness but denying the power pertaining to godliness (3:5).

Timothy is not to concern himself with them. Their ignorance and mindlessness will eventually become plain to all (3:9). Timothy is simply to turn away from this sort of people (3:5). He is to continue in the things which he has learned and concerning which he been made confident (3:14).

2 Timothy 4:2-5 When believers will not put up with healthy doctrine

"Preach the Word!" So the verse is rendered in most translations. From this some have developed an artificial distinction between preaching and teaching. Paul charges meant that Timothy's teaching of the Word was to be done with authority, as one heralding a message. He wouldn't do this with practiced oratory or hours in a homiletics lab. He did this by thoroughly knowing the Word and then teaching it so clearly and accurately that the only means of rejecting what was taught was to reject God's Word. (After showing a friend scriptures regarding an issue in which he was involved, he responded, "I don't care what that says, I know what I've felt!") Too often the powerful preaching of skilled speakers lacks any Biblical authority and doesn't come close obeying this charge.

²⁹ Speaking with a mouthful full of food is distasteful but is not unrighteous and may require forbearance on the part of others.

³⁰ H.L. Schafer, *The Spiritual Christian*; Dispensational Theological Seminary: Gaston, Or, 1996, p.52

Timothy was to speak the word with authority, being ready when it was seasonable and unseasonable. He needed to reprove, rebuke, and exhort. This is accomplished by long-suffering [he may suffering due to these people] and doctrine. Doctrine is that which is to be believed and practiced [διδαχη]. Timothy did this knowing that the time was coming when believers would not put up with healthy doctrine which is for faith alone (4:3). They would want to be taught how to live by that kind of truth, though that truth is not for practice. Teaching the word with authority would be harder when there is an abundance of teachers willing to teach Old Testament truth in an unhealthy manner. There would be so many of this sort of teacher that Paul wrote, “they will heap up in piles teachers ...” They would tickle the ears of those who have turned away from the truth and turned to myths (4:4). Timothy was to reprove, rebuke and exhort believers by continuing to speak the Word!

Titus 1:10-16

Among Titus’s responsibilities on Crete was the appointment of elders for the churches. The churches needed competent elders/bishops/pastors (1:5). Paul provided Titus a list of qualifications for the men that he could appoint to these churches (1:6-9). Such men must hold firmly to the faithful [dependable] word which is measured by doctrine. Since this kind of doctrine [διδαχη] is for the believer’s faith and practice, he can depend upon it for daily living. These men must know what scriptures are for their faith and what scriptures are for their faith and practice. Knowing this keeps doctrine which is only for faith [διδασκαλια] healthy. He is then able to use this healthy doctrine to exhort and reprove those who are opposing. The best means of countering those who misuse the Old Testament, which is part of the διδασκαλια, is the proper use of the Old Testament. The elder can then encourage the opposing believer to join him and reprove this misuse.

The elders on Crete would face many who would oppose (1:10). These would not submit. They would speak things that have no result³¹. They would also lead astray the believers’ frame of mind, encouraging them to restrictively frame their minds with the wrong truths. They would overturn whole households, teaching things which they should not. They taught for the sake of base gain. They considered pastoring a money making career rather than a spiritual gift for the benefit of others.

Titus and the elders were to shut the mouths of these teachers (1:11). The verb meant to muzzle the mouth. Because these are believers, Titus and the elders muzzled them by sharply reproofing them to be healthy in the faith. The reproof would point to the spiritual life accurately and what was truly meant by the unhealthy [misapplied] doctrine. The adverb “sharply” is a reminder that this is not a debate. The word literally meant to cut off from. The elders were not to discuss this with these men but show them the convincing facts of truth and cut it off.

Paul further explained the problems of these errant teachers in verses 14-16. 2:1 states the best recourse in the face of this oncoming problem. Titus was to speak the things which were conspicuously fitting or suitable to healthy doctrine which is for faith only. When Titus taught believers how to live the spiritual life, he was to do so from the proper scriptures. When he taught truth which is not for the believer’s practice, he was to leave it that way and not imply any kind of application.

Titus 3: 9-10 Handling a heretic

As Paul began to close this letter to Titus, he returned to the problem addressed in chapter one. Titus was to avoid [περίστημι] Moronic debates and genealogies (3:9). He was to avoid strifes and

³¹ The word “idle” or “vain” is ματαιος - that which is empty in outcome or result.

fighters characterized by the law. As he had written to Timothy, so he wrote Titus that such fights are unprofitable and have no positive result [μῦταιος]. Though popular christian opinion is that such fights are necessary and the responsibility of the pastor/theologian, they do not have the results which accomplish God's purpose.

The people who wished to engage in these debates and fights were not submitting to God's Word but making choices about what they would do. This is heresy, a conscious choosing what one will do rather than accepting God's plainly revealed Word. As a result these are heretics or people characterized by heresy.³² "In the literal and original sense, a heretic was one who makes a choice which pleases him, independent of other considerations."³³ Titus was to admonish a heretic. If he would not change after a second admonition, Titus was to reject or decline him. He does so knowing objectively that this one has been perverted, is sinning and self condemned. Admonish a heretic once, twice and then avoid him.

2 Peter 3:9-11 Growing by grace

Peter wrote this second letter to encourage the believers in their daily conduct (3:11). The conduct of these believers was being influenced by false teachers claiming that everything was continuing as it has always taken place, and that God has not intervened in human history (3:3-5). Such teaching became the basis of the others following their lewd conduct (2:2-3). These false teachers were leading believers to return to works of the flesh (2:20-21).

A proper perspective regarding the short-term nature of all these things, and God's imminent intervention in human history as well as His previous interventions is an encouragement to live in light of the future. Teaching believers about God's coming destruction of all these things and the error of uniformitarianism is an incentive to live one's daily repetitious life in holiness and godliness (3:9-11). Therefore, one should grow by grace and an experiential knowledge (3:18). Peter did not confront the false teachers. He addressed the believers and demonstrated the error of the false teachers. He also pointed to the correct perspective and the means of growth.

1 John 2:17ff Responding to those who depart over doctrine

The assembly which John wrote had experienced a "church - split". A number of individuals which John identified as anti-christs had left the churches (1 John 2:19). These individuals were now being heard by the world because they were of the world. Because the believers who had remained behind were God's children, the world was not hearing the believers (1 John 4:1-6).

John addressed the "young men" twice. The young men had been victorious regarding the evil one (2:13). These believers had learned to have victory over Satan. They had learned to put on the whole armor of God so they could resist Satan (Ephesians 6:11). The verb "to have victory" [νικῶ] is Perfect in tense. They had victory in the past with the result that they were still in the state of having victory. Because believers must be empowered in the Lord before putting on the armor (Ephesians 6:10) these were having victory over the sin nature (cp Romans 6:11). In verse 14, John added that the Word of God was at ease in them. These believers had grown to the point that they were no longer wrestling with Scriptures.

³² αἰρεομαί -the verb meaning to pick or choose is the basis of heresy, choosing for one's self [the Middle voice] how one will use Scripture, rather than submitting to what God has plainly revealed.

³³ Homer Kent, Jr. The Pastor Epistles; Moody Press: Chicago, 1958, p. 245.

They had made significant progress in their spiritual growth. John's description is commendatory of their progress.

The "young men" did have a problem! 1 John 2:15-17 addressed that problem.

Stop loving the world, neither the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love for the Father is not in him. Because everything in the world: the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes and the empty boasting of life, is not from the Father but on the contrary it is from the world. And the World is passing away and the lusts of it. But the one doing the desirous will of God, he remains at ease into the age.

While these believers were having victory over two spiritual enemies and the Word of God was at ease in them, the world was still an object of their love. John tells them to "stop loving" it. **μη αγαπατε** is an Imperative charge. "The negative particle **μη** is to be used, and the construction prohibits the continuance of an act which is in progress. It may well be translated "Stop ...""³⁴ These believers were loving the world system!

To understand how believers, commended for their progress could be loving the world it is necessary to understand the world system. It is also necessary to understand how they were loving it. World is a translation of the Greek **κοσμος** an organized system.³⁵ It is a system organized under Satan's direction.³⁶ Satan is the ruler of this organized system (John 12:31; 14:30). It is a system which hates God, Christ and His people (John 15:18; 17:14). It is a system which has its own lusts (Titus 2:12). It is a system characterized by the present evil age (Ephesians 2:2 "course" is "age"). It is a system which honors wisdom, writing and debates (1 Corinthians 1:20).

These believers were loving by laying down their lives for this system. They were attempting to use its methods to appeal to its constituents. They desired the world to hear them as it heard those of the world. To these, John wrote, "stop loving the world!" Employing the world's methods to reach the world is not God's plan and it will not work. The methods as part of the world system would have involved reliance upon this wisdom, writing and debates. But God is not using these. The world system has not come to know God by wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:21).

For the sake of the spiritually young believers, which John called "little born ones" and "little learners"³⁷, he described the nature and error of these antichrists. They departed from the assembly³⁸ because they were not of the assembly (1 John 2:19). The preposition **εκ** indicates source. These antichrists did not have a source among the believers. In fact, they were children of the devil (3:10). These anti-

³⁴ Ray Summer Essentials of New Testament Greek, Nashville: Broadman, 1950, p. 113.

³⁵ "order, regular disposition, ... the world, the material universe, ... the aggregate of mankind, ... the public ..." Thomas Sheldon Green op cit. pp. 104-105

³⁶ There are various usages of **κοσμος**. For further study consult a concordance such as Englishman's Greek Concordance. See also H.L Schafer's The World System and Other Appeals 1997.

³⁷ John does not use **τεκνον** - child or **παις** - young learning child but the diminutive forms **τεκνιον** - little children and **παιδιον** little learning children.

³⁸ Historically there is good evidence that John was writing to more than one church in the region surrounding Ephesus.

Christians denied that Jesus is the Christ (2:22). This is the New Testament usage of “Christ” which emphasizes Jesus’ resurrected and glorified status (Acts 2:36) in contrast to the Gospels’ emphasis on His kingship with reference to Israel. These antichrists were denying the literal bodily permanent resurrection of Jesus (cp 4:3). Either all or some also denied Jesus’ deity, thereby denying the Father and the Son (2:22-23). These were blatant unbelievers in essentials of the gospel: Jesus’ real humanity, deity and resurrection.

After explaining the problem, John delineated the response in 2:27. They were to allow their anointing, the Holy Spirit, to teach them. They were to obey the Holy Spirit’s instruction to abide in Christ! They needed to remember their status as children (3:1) and their future (3:2). The young believers needed to love other believers by their actions not by their words enjoying the free access to God (3:16-22). Again, the best response is to begin or continue living the spiritual life. Reliance upon the world’s methods, trying to meet the world where it is, is loving the world system.

2 John 7-10

John wrote these same churches again. There were many deceivers who had gone out into the world (7). These deceivers did not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh. Coming is a Present tense participle. The deceivers did not believe or state the Jesus is coming in flesh. They did not believe in the real bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. As he wrote in the first letter, he again identified these deceivers as antichrists. Because they had gone beyond the practical doctrine concerning Christ, they did not have God (9). These are unbelievers.

How should these saints respond to these men? John wrote that they should not receive them into their homes (10). They shouldn’t even greet them. The common greeting was “Joy!” They were not to extend such a greeting to any who denied the real bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. John’s Spirit-led response is different from that popularly espoused in Christendom.

Scriptures which lay emphasis on the importance of the believer’s conduct matching God’s revelation for him.

The New Testament writers did not encourage the confrontation of false teachers. They taught the avoidance of such teachers. They also laid emphasis upon continuing to teach proper truth and continuing to properly live the spiritual life. The following sample of Scriptures demonstrate how important it is that a believer’s conduct match what the believer teaches. His conduct also counters false teaching.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 -Practice which matches preaching

The manner in which one lives his life is important in a conflict. Paul wrote the Corinthians that he treated himself severely so that he would not be unapproved after having preached to others. The Authorized Version’s translation “castaway” has led some to erroneously conclude that Paul taught one could lose salvation. The Greek **αδοκιμος** is the opposite of **δοκιμος** approval. It is derived from the verb **δοκιμαζω**, to test for the purpose of determining what is of value.³⁹ Paul did not desire to teach others how to live and then himself live a life which failed to receive a stamp of approval. His manner of life demonstrated that the what is taught does indeed work!

Ephesians 5:13 -Countering the darkness by a walk of light

³⁹ The other New Testament word for test, **πειραζω**, is a temptation, a test to determine what is lacking in character.

As in 1 Corinthians 9 this passage addresses practice. Some of the Ephesians saints were living in a manner which resembled unbelievers. Paul pictured the unbelieving community as a grave yard. The “sleeping” saints needed to arise out from among the dead ones and Christ would shine the light consisting of His life by⁴⁰ them (5:14; John 1:4). All things which are reprove are made plainly visible by the light (5:13). If the believers would live out Christ’s life consisting of light, then the very quality of their life would be the convincing proof that shed light upon the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11). Christ’s life seen through a believer is proof that others’ works lack in character.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 -Dealing with lazy insubordinate believers

While the Thessalonians faced some false teaching, especially with regard to the day of the Lord, Paul only corrected the error that had been communicated. The error which Paul did address involved living in light of the departure of the saints to be with Christ (2:1-2). Paul demonstrated by his lifestyle among them, how a believer should work while waiting for the Lord’s soon appearing. Some in Thessalonica were letting the Church foot the bill. These brothers were walking disorderly and not according to the tradition or thing past on which they received from Paul. They had become busy bodies. (13-15). Those who were living correctly were to avoid or stay away from every brother who walked about in this disorderly manner (3:6). While they awaited the Lord’s appearing they were not to lose heart in doing good (3:13). They were not to keep company or mingle with the brothers who would not obey Paul’s word (3:14). They were not to deem him an enemy but admonish him as a brother. (3:15). Since this passage deals with practical conduct among believers, there is some teaching in the form of an admonition. The Thessalonians were not confronting false false teachers therefore they could admonish another believer regarding his conduct.

1 Peter 5:3 Elders are to be a type

This passage is included because it is the very background to the repeated responses. Elders are pastors so they are able to shepherd (5:2). They are also overseers [bishops], so they can oversee the flock of God. As pointed out the three key responsibilities of the elder revealed in Scripture are feeding, watching and leading a local flock. It is a common temptation for Pastors to take on issues and to react thus deviating from his first responsibilities. All three are of these are mentioned here: feed [tend], taking the oversight, being ensamples.

As has been observed the best means of countering false teaching is to continue to feed the flock. Believers needs a consistent regular diet of God’s Word, especially as it addresses their relationship to God. This is too often lacking in assemblies which are emphasizing outreach, teaching on political and world issues, and the popular concerns of christendom. They have little time to really teach God’s people. Such time is usually reserved for a Sunday School class. Pastors prepare sermons instead of simply teaching God’s Word with authority.

Pastors do need to watch for spiritual dangers. As seen in Acts 20, the dangers were not outside the assembly but within. So the pastor needs to know what is happening among the sheep. He needs to know what is being taught among the believers, even the believers who are children.

Finally, and at least as important as the first two, the pastor is to be an example. His conduct should match what he is teaching. If he explains how to have victory over the three spiritual enemies, he ought to be practicing that and experiencing victory. If explains how believers are to interact with other members of the body of Christ, then he should be doing that also. People do learn by hearing truth but

⁴⁰ “By them” interprets the pronoun **σΟΙ** as Instrumental in case.

they also learn by seeing it modeled. If truth is only objective [οἶδα] and not becoming experiential [γινώσκω] and fully experiential [ἐπιγινώσκω] in one's life there is a problem. Therefore, having taught truth, the pastor lives that truth. This both teaches and counters false teaching.

I Peter 3:15 Ready with an answer

This verse is almost the marching orders for most apologetic ministries. In *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* Josh McDowell lists it first in a set of verses supposed to support apologetics.⁴¹ The title "Apologet" describes a wide variety of individuals. At the extreme are those who believe the Bible and its truths need defending, perhaps regarding evolution, its genuineness, its presentation of God. The more realistic apologist sticks to God's Word, realizing it is sufficient and recognizing that apart from the Spirit's work in an unbeliever no amount of proof will result in faith!

However, Peter's verse is not a broad statement in support of giving answers. Peter was writing to dispersed believers (1 Peter 1:1, 2). They were experiencing real hardships. He described them, "yet since it is necessary, you are being grieved a little while by various temptations," (1:6). Later he wrote, "Beloved, don't think, it is strange, the fire that has come to be among you for your temptation, as a strange thing is happening to you." (4:12). Under these circumstances, many were suffering though they were living properly (3:14).

Peter instructed them to respond to these sufferings and difficulties by setting Christ apart as Lord.⁴² Peter uses a double Accusative, both Lord and Christ being in the Accusative case. Christ has the definite article which leaves Lord in the predicate position, "Christ as Lord". It is the believer's responsibility to recognize Christ's Lordship! It is the believer's responsibility to make Christ Lord!

With Christ in His rightful place, within the believer's heart, the believer should be prepared to give an answer to those asking concerning the hope that is within him. The hope within the believer is based upon various works of God. Is the believer to explain how Christ indwells, sharing His life so that he may have the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27)? Is the believer to explain how the Father's seed is in him so that he has the greatest promise of being able to share in common in God's kind of nature (2 Peter 1:4)? These two examples demonstrate that a detailed explanation of the believer's hope is not Peter's thought. "Hope" is in the Genitive case and preceded by the preposition *περι*. Dana and Mantey point out that in such a construction, a general relationship is implied.⁴³ Peter is concerned with a general answer. That answer is that Jesus Christ, God in flesh,

"died on the cross in place of our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried and He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures" 1 Corinthians 15:3,4

Additionally, through believing in Him as described, one can have the forgiveness of sins (cp Acts 13:38-39). That is concisely the answer generally for the hope that is within me! An unbeliever can not comprehend the details of present tense salvation. Neither does the Holy Spirit convince the unbeliever of anything aside from the matters addressed by the Gospel (cp John 16:8-10). Therefore the general answer is primarily the gospel. It is not an apologetic for the pagan.

⁴¹ *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, rev.; Here's Life Publishers: San Bernadino, CA. 1986, p. 1

⁴² The Majority text uniformly supports "God" rather than "Christ". The textual evidence is quite evenly divided between the two words, for which see the United Bible Society text, op cit.. "Christ" makes more sense in the context.

⁴³ Dana & Mantey, op cit. p. 109

Hebrews 13:7 Seeing the Outcome of their conduct

Paul wrote Hebrews instructing these Christians to leave Judaism behind while they were able (cp Hebrews 13:13 - "let us go out to Him, outside the camp"). These believers had never left Judaism (cp Acts 21:20). Paul encouraged them to go beyond the basics of Christianity and rise above to their position in Christ at the throne of grace (6:1-2; 4:8-16; 10:19-22). They had shepherds that led them, who spoke the Word of God to them. They were to imitate their faith by watching the outcome of their daily conduct. These men were to live in a manner which matched what they taught concerning God's Word. The saints were not told to imitate their actions but their faith. One can imitate faith by living the spiritual life in the manner which the leaders were teaching it. The leaders believed God's promises and lived in light of them so these believers were to do the same. Again, conduct and teaching should go hand in hand.

Conclusion

Through the history of Christianity from the Apostolic fathers such as Polycarp down to the present, many have promoted the need to give a rationale defense of the faith. In many cases these have become long drawn out battles with blatant unbelievers. Additionally the church has faced a myriad of doctrinal deviations, many repeated within the church. These deviations have been the basis of councils and debates, often times taking place in the learned ivory towers. The battles over words have confused people. As a result the average believer has considered these things ridiculous. Paul wrote the Corinthians that it is necessary that there are some heretics among you, so that those who are approved can be plainly seen (1 Corinthians 11:19). By directing her attention to all these issues, the Church has often been so distracted from the things to which God intended for her that believers are spiritually emaciated and unable to contend with these problems when they personally confront them.

Such distractions unwittingly encourage believers to engage in works of the flesh to accomplish what they perceive to be God's purpose. Some even become ensnared to Satan. God never encourages believers to resort to fleshly means.

Many of these problems have existed at the fault of believers; believers who have failed to understand God's real purpose for His Church; believers who have failed to understand God's real purpose for the pastor-teacher/elder/bishop, believers who have failed to recognize the Scriptures plain teaching regarding such problems.

The Church is an assembly of God's people for the edification of those people. It is not a community. It is not the community. It does not include unbelievers. It at no time needs to justify itself or its message to the world. It is here to the glory of God alone! It is a work of God through which God is making known to spirit beings His multifaceted wisdom and will make known some of the riches of grace through kindness in the coming ages (Ephesians 2:7; 3:9-11).

The pastor-teacher/elder/bishop is gifted to shepherd God's flock. He is not placed to oversee the unsaved or reach the unsaved. He is to feed the flock God's Word which is for the flock's faith and practice. He is to watch and warn the flock of spiritual dangers. He does not warn the flock by an abundance of teaching on false teaching. He warns by teaching the truth so thoroughly that when the false teaching is seen it is plainly seen to be false and in contradiction to God's plan.

It has been seen in several of the passages considered that engaging in debates frequently results in works of the flesh. Strife is a work of the flesh. Envy is a work of the flesh. Division is a work of the flesh. All these and more are potential results of engaging in debates. The believer should not engage in that which encourages carnality.

The Scriptures plainly reveal that an apostles, pastor-teacher or any grace believer is not to argue, fight, debate or in anyway enter into a verbal exchange with false teachers whether believers or unbelievers. Each is to continue to teach and hold to New Testament truth for his faith and practice. This is God's prescribed method of facing doctrinal deviations.

Different uses of **πιστις** [faith] with the article in New Testament Grace Revelation

<p>“The” is an article of previous reference</p> <hr/>	<p>“The” indicates a particular attitude or act of faith, e.g. use of faith as fruit from the Spirit.</p> <hr/>	<p>“The” indicates a particular content of faith - namely truths regarding the spiritual life.</p> <hr/>
<p>— Romans 3:30, 31; 12:6 Galatians 3:14 (from 9, 11), 23 (2x), 25, 26 (3:24) Hebrews 11:39; 12:2 James 2:17, 18, 20, 22, 26 (v. 14)</p>	<p>— Acts 13:8 Romans 4:11; 10:8 2 Corinthians 4:13; 10:15 Galatians 1:23; 6:10 Ephesians 1:15; 3:12, 17 Philippians 1:25, 27; 2:17; 3:9 Colossians 1:4; 2:5, 12 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 8 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 4, 11; 3:2 2 Timothy 1:5 Philemon 5, 6 Hebrews 4:2; 13:7 James 1:3; 2:1; 5:15 1 Peter 1:7, 9 2 Peter 1:5 1 John 5:4 Jude 20 Revelation 2:13, 19</p>	<p>— 2 Corinthians 1:24 Ephesians 4:13; 6:16 Colossians 1:23; 2:7 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10 1 Timothy 3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8, 12; 6:10, 12, 21 2 Timothy 2:18; 3:8, 10; 4:7 Titus 1:13; 2:2 Hebrews 12:2 James 1:3 1 Peter 1:21; 5:9 Jude 3</p>

APPENDIX 2

Words used to describe the avoidance of and response to false teachers

Reprove [ελεγχω] - This word describes the use of truth to prove a fact in a manner which is convincing. Biblically, the emphasis is upon the Biblical truth not an logical argument.

Rebuke - [επιτιμαω] - Built upon the word for honor, rebuke is the charge brought against one who has failed to live up to that which is honorable. Upon the value or honor there is a charge made.

Exhort -[παρακαλεω] and exhortation [παρακλησις] - If one has made progress in an area, he can then turn and call in alongside others. He is calling them to join him. He is encouraging them that they too can make it to where he is, either physically or in Scripture spiritually.

Admonish - [νουθεω] - Placing a fact in the mind is intended to cause a believer to see his error. Admonition involves a “No!” but it does so by putting the believers in mind of that which is true.

Refuse - [παραιτεω] - Originally this was the act of asking to be dismissed or asking to be let aside from a matter. Paul’s use of this word emphasizes an individual’s dismissal of himself or moving aside from a matter.

Avoid - [περιστημι] - Etymologically this word meant to stand around, with the idea of going around, steering clear of something. One sees an error and goes around it.

Avoid [εκκλινω] -While it meant to lead back or out, it metaphorically meant to lean out of the way of an error or one causing an error. Giving free passage is not the idea but rather not getting into a conflict with them is! Don't' give them the time of day!

Cleanse [εκκαθαρω] - This is simply a strengthened form of the word “cleanse”, “to clean out”.

Contend [επαγωνιζομαι]- This is a strengthened form of the word struggle or agony. It describes real effort in a contest or challenge. It does not describe a verb or doctrinal contest but one involving the believer consistently living the spiritual life even while others are twisting grace.

Charge [παραγγελω] - This word describes a charge which has come from alongside a superior and being given to others, such as CHRIST to Paul to Timothy to the Ephesians.

Withdraw [αφιστημι] Literally, stand off. Back off! This strongly means to remove one’s self.

Turn away from [αποτρεπει] Simply this is a turning away from. One hears error and turns away.